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SUBJECT: DEMOBILIZED REINTEGRATION PROGRAM GETS MAKEOVER,
FACES NEW CHALLENGES

REF: BOGOTA 001

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.
Reason: 1.4 (b,d)

Summary

11. (SBU) The High Commissioner for Reintegration Office (ACR) has assisted 37,137 demobilized (29,776 collective and 7361 individual), but is revising its focus to respond to new challenges. ACR lifted its 18-24 month limit on program participation, and has conditioned receipt of benefits on participation in its programs. The ACR is also reviewing criteria for participation to ensure that demobilized "properly graduate" the program instead of prematurely being ejected. More resources are being dedicated to psychosocial services, community outreach, education, and improving their prospects for long-term employment. The ACR is working with the Colombian National Police (CNP) to monitor crimes against demobilized. It is also trying to locate 3000 individual deserters and 1864 paramilitaries who did not enter the reintegration program. End Summary.

Where We Are with Reintegration

12. (SBU) The High Commissioner for Reintegration Office (ACR) has assisted 37,137 demobilized (29,774 collective and 7361 individual), but is revising its policies and interagency coordination to better deal with emerging challenges. Of the 37,137 demobilized, 80% are former paramilitaries and 20% are individual deserters from the FARC, ELN, and other terrorist groups. ACR officials told us they have committed \$38 million on reintegration programs since October 2007 and will maintain its "equal treatment" policy for all demobilized groups. This year, ACR conditioned receipt of benefits on participation in psychosocial programs. Demobilized receive approximately \$80-\$213 monthly with a transportation stipend of \$42-58 as long as they complete 80% of psychosocial programs, 60% of education programs, and 80% of vocational preparation classes.

13. (SBU) ACR Commissioner Frank Pearl told us his team is also developing criteria to ensure that demobilized "properly graduate" the reintegration process. Many who prematurely depart the program face unemployment and discrimination, leading them to join new criminal bands or return to other criminal activity. Excluding those killed or jailed, some 3000 individual deserters and 1864 former paramilitaries did

not enter the program and their whereabouts are unknown. Pearl said locating these individuals will be a key ACR goal. The Inspector General's office (Procuraduria) is also due to present a study funded by USAID and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that will measure the degree of participants' progress in reintegration, looking at factors such as literacy, civic participation, and progress in psycho-social programs, in five departments.

Raising Psycho Social Assistance, Community Involvement

¶4. (SBU) ACR adviser Luis Cepeda told us the reintegration program is shifting more resources towards psychosocial services, education, and long term capacity-building for job creation. At the end of 2007, 3800 demobilized had participated in psychosocial sessions; by April 2008, that figure had risen to 32,000. Pearl emphasized that psychosocial services must be tailored to individual needs without creating dependency. ACR Teams are modifying psychological services to ensure they go beyond monitoring the demobilized. Pearl said the ACR is also setting up more community reintegration service centers to improve access for the demobilized and their families.

¶5. (U) Better coordination with communities and municipalities is another core shift in ACR programs. ACR already has worked with 15 municipalities and 11 departments to incorporate demobilization programs into their development plans; programs with an additional 80 municipalities are in the works. By engaging victims and marginalized groups in

receptor communities, ACR hopes to implement measures to reduce discrimination and resentment. It has already worked with local civic groups and universities in 35 receptor communities to promote reconciliation.

¶6. (U) Another important element of ACR's renewed efforts is expanded outreach to the private sector to generate jobs for demobilized. Since 2007, 652 companies have offered 3895 jobs to demobilized, but demand remains much greater than the number of jobs offered. Colgalletas cookie factory in Medellin has hired 50 employees, and palm and cacao processing factories in Norte de Santander and Meta plan to hire over 300 demobilized. ACR has itself financed 202 business proposals by 865 demobilized in the past year. From 2002-April 2008, the GOC Reintegration Program spent \$22 million on self employment projects for demobilized, creating 7788 jobs. Moreover, work on the Social Investment Fund has progressed with private sector support to encourage and support projects and agri-businesses that employ demobilized.

Bogota Initiatives Complement ACR

¶7. (SBU) Dario Villamizar of the Bogota Mayor's office said the city included a "peace, reconstruction, and reconciliation component" in this year's city development plan, devoting resources to the 4500 demobilized who live in Bogota as well as vulnerable communities. In addition, 300 demobilized are on the city's payroll. The city's plans complement the ACR's programs--with European Union and IOM funding--and follow the Medellin model of responding to local needs. Pearl and Mayor Moreno have met three times this year to coordinate needs and responses. Villamizar explained that in Bogota, 97% of demobilized come from other cities. 85% are former FARC, and 85% have only a third grade level education. Thus, demands for housing, humanitarian aid, education, and jobs remain high.

Security Challenges Still

¶8. (C) Cepeda voiced concerns over recruitment of demobilized by narco-trafficking groups and criminal bands,

particularly in Cordoba and the Uraba region of Antioquia. He said 6% of demobilized have been killed or removed from the program for committing crimes. MAPP/OAS officials told us 870 demobilized have been killed, with few leads on investigations. They fear threats and forced recruitment by criminal bands will undermine the reintegration effort. In Bogota, Villamizar told us there were 13 murders of demobilized last year, with five so far this year. In Medellin, 180 former paramilitaries have been killed. Cepeda said a separate protection program for demobilized does not exist, but added that local CNP and Human Rights Ombudsman (Defensoria) offices respond to threat complaints. A police directive of February 22, 2008 pledged stronger coordination among the ACR and CNP to monitor crimes against demobilized.

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